See No Evil

A Proposal and a Plea to Amend the Policies
of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church
on Divorce and Remarriage

written by

Robert Norvin Crawford
of Calgary Central S.D.A. Church
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

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Author: Robert Norvin Crawford (1955-)
Author ISNI: 0000 0005 2404 9033

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Description (short):
A 1993 Proposal to change the doctrines of the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church regarding Divorce and Remarriage.

Description (long):
A 1993 Proposal to change the doctrines of the Seventh-Day Adventist (SDA) Church regarding Divorce and Remarriage. The Proposal advocates the total abolition of Divorce from an Arch-Right-Wing point of view. The arguments cover a wide range of areas - mostly Bible-based. It is claimed that all divorce is the sin of: 1. Holy Wedding Perjury, 2. Dishonouring Parents-in-law as well as undermining and nullifying the overall theme of the Bible, which is Forgiveness and Reconciliation. It is claimed Divorce is the Secular Crime of Bigamy and the crime of kidnapping grandchildren and giving them to step-grandparents, knowing that the husband's parents will never see their biological grandchildren ever again. It is claimed that, according to the Rules of Grammar, the infamous exception clause of Matthew 19:9 only applies to 'separation' and cannot apply to 'marries another' because of the intervening conjunction 'and', which blocks any modification according to the rules of grammar. This means that all remarriage is adultery, irrespective of the legality of the separation. The Board of Elders of the local SDA Church in Sylvan Lake, (in 1993) rejected the Proposal for reform, and wouldn't even allow it on the agenda for discussion or debate leading to a vote by the church membership. [206 words]

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- change all double quotes from " to `` or '' as needed.

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CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND ASSUMPTIONS

Bible Inconsistency or not?

The Bible[1] says: "...the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Luke 16:18 (NIV)	E.G. White says: "...if she...should obtain a divorce legally on the grounds that her husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses". AH 344
The Bible says: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her." Mark 10:11 (NIV)	The Bible says: "But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances:..." I Cor 7:15 (NIV)

The Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the Biblical teaching on Divorce and Remarriage seemingly, is full of contradictions. In this paper, I propose to show that there need be no contradictions between Bible texts or between the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. What appear to be contradictions result from untested presumptions masquerading as conclusions from fact. It is my purpose, in this paper, to highlight those presumptions and show that there is no contradictions when conclusions are derived strictly from what is written in the Bible.

In the present Adventist policy on Divorce and Remarriage, there are many 'ifs', 'and', and 'buts'. Such a situation is a shame to Adventism, showing the extent to which *Situation Ethics* have invaded our doctrine. Every time we evoke an 'if', an 'and' or a 'but', we are saying that: 'this Truth is untrue in this situation' and 'untrue in that situation' and on it goes. We are denying the truth in what we are trying to teach. We are witnessing to the falseness of our doctrines (in certain situations, they would say).

Our goal ought to be to discover the 'Universal Truths' - those statements which are to be seen and acknowledged as applying in all situations and for all time. 'The Golden Rule' is an example of a universal truth. It is acknowledged in all cultures throughout history and forms the basis of all law. Every religion has its form of the Golden Rule. Finding universal truth is not an impossibility. We must seekout these Universal Truths and extinguish 'exceptions to the rule' in our doctrines. If our rules have exceptions; its because we are yet to find the 'Universal Truth' on the subject. The number of exceptions is in direct relation to the distance removed from a 'Universal Truth'.

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[1]Note: all texts are from the Living Bible (Paraphrased), Tyndale House, 1974 unless otherwise noted: e.g. King James Version=(KJV). New International Version=(NIV).

Our present policy on Divorce and Remarriage is full of exceptions to the rule. I hope to show, then, a better, more Biblically consistent set of truths on the topic of Divorce and Remarriage. Upon these truths, our doctrine and policies should rest.

These truths are not new to the Adventist Church. I believe that these are the truths which were acknowledged and practised by the founders of our church. Through the years, a different interpretation has been allowed to be applied to our founding beliefs and upon our truths, exceptions have been allowed to rest. It is time to acknowledge the Universality of these truths and brush off the exceptions which witness that our truths are false (in certain situations?!).

The Bible does not contradict itself. If we find inconsistencies in Bible teachings; it is our interpretation that is inconsistent - not the Bible. We are obliged to change our interpretation and not try to justify it by evoking our 'exceptions to the rule'. It is upon this doctrine that I found my arguments.

Ellen White's writings do not contradict the Bible. Ellen White states that the Bible is the highest authority and her writings are not to be interpreted as to contradict the Bible. It is my contention that Ellen White's writings on divorce and remarriage have been misinterpreted so as to contradict Bible teachings and with an alternate interpretation; everything is logical and consistent. In the above table; there is no contradiction and I shall shortly show why.

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CHAPTER 2: OATHS

Thesis I: Vows made to God are Holy and cannot be dissolved. They can only be fulfilled.

"You shall not us the name of Jehovah your God irreverently, nor use it to swear to a falsehood. You will not escape punishment if you do." Ex 20:7

"You must not swear to a falsehood, thus bringing repraoch upon the name of your God,..." Lev 19:12

"You must fear the Lord your God and ...take oaths by his name alone." Deut 10:20

"Now Moses summoned the leaders of the tribes and told them, "The Lord has commanded that when anyone makes a promise to the Lord, either to do something or to quit doing something, that vow must not be broken: the person making the vow must do exactly as he has promised." Num 30:1

"When you make a vow to the Lord, be prompt in doing whatever it is you promised him, for the Lord demands that you promptly fulfil your vows; it is a sin if you don't. (But it is not a sin if you refrain from vowing!) Once you make the vow, you must be careful to do as you have said, for it was your own choice, and you have vowed to the Lord your God."
Deut 23:21 - 23

"For these men have done a terrible thing among my people. They have committed adultery with their neighbour's wives and have lied in my name. I know, for I have seen everything they do, says the Lord." Jer 29:23

"But now you refuse and have defiled my name by shrugging off your oath..." Jer 34:16

"For the Lord God says: I will repay you for your broken promises. You lightly broke your solemn vows to me, yet I will keep the pledge I made to you when you were young." Ezek 16:58

"For the king of Israel broke his promise after swearing to obey; therefore he shall not escape." Ezek 17:18

"Fulfil all your vows that you have made to Jehovah your God." Psalms 76:11

"...it is sinful to make rash promise to God..." Ecc 5:1 - 4
"So when you talk to God and vow to him that you will do something, don't delay in doing it, for God has no pleasure in fools. Keep your promise to him. It is far better not to say you'll do something than to say you will and then not do it. In that case, your mouth is making you sin. Don't try to defend yourself by telling the messenger from god that it was all a mistake (to make the vow). That would make God very angry;..." Ecc 5:4 - 7

III Don't Use GOD's NAME to Swear Falsely

When has God ever released anyone from an oath made to him?

The Bible is full of examples of people keeping their oaths to God even under the most trying circumstances. As examples:

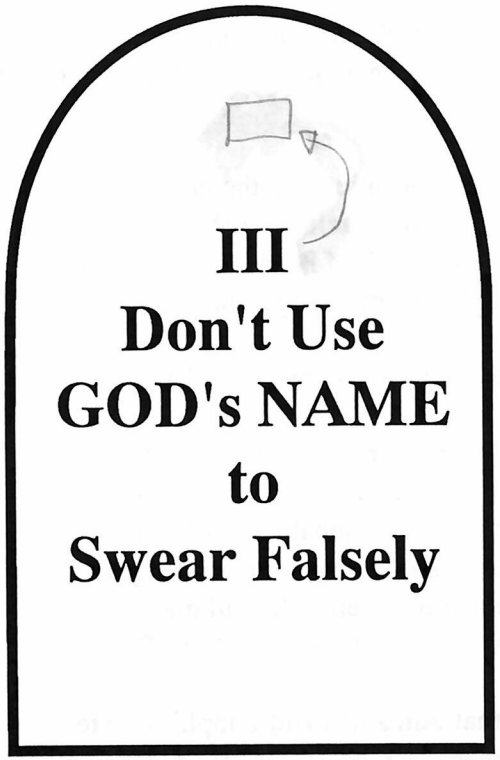
°The woman of Jerico obtained a vow from the spies and the children of Israel kept that oath even though she was not an Israelite. (Joshua 2:14)
°Joshua and the leaders of Israelites swore an Oath of Peace to the people of Gibeon and dared not break it even though their messengers used trickery to obtain their oath. (Joshua 9:18)
°Jephthah sacrificed his daughter rather than break his vow to God. (Judges 12:29 -)
°Hannah vowed to give God her only child Samuel. (I Samuel 1:11)
°In the ninth and tenth chapter of Ezra we read that Ezra did not release the people from their promise not to intermarry with the inhabitants of Canaan. He did not say, "Well, what is done is done" and "there is'nt anything that can be done about it now". He made them annul their unlawful marriages and their false vows and perform the vows they had made to God. (Ezra 9 -)
°In the Fifth Chapter of Acts, we read that Annanias and Sapphira were killed for violating their vows they had made to God. (Acts 5:1 -).

These are just a few of the instances in the Bible where vows made to God were kept. How can we now say that today, we don't have to keep the vows we have made if we don't feel like it? No, my friends; when we make an oath to Our Lord, it becomes a law to us and even our sin of not fulfilling our vow does not release us from the obligation to keep our law. Even sin does not do away with the obligation to keep the law. Nonfulfillment of a vow does not release us from the obligation to fulfil it. God has prescribed forgiveness for sin upon repentance. Repentance implies stopping our sinning and starting to do what we have neglected to do. If we sin by neglecting to carry out our vows made to God; when we repent we say we are sorry for our wrongdoing and we must also show our repentance by making right what we have done wrong - we must fulfil the vows we have neglected to carry out.

The Thirtieth chapter of Numbers deals with the validating of an oath within a family unit and makes the male head of the family responsible for authenticating or nullifying an oath made by anyone in his family. "So her husband may either confirm or nullify her vow." Num 30:13. Note that God does not say in this chapter that he "releases" that person from their oath but that "Jehovah will forgive her because her father would not let her do it." (Num 30:5)

Even Sin does not do away with the obligation to keep the Law.

Now some would say that this example in Numbers chapter 30 is evidence of God nullifying or releasing someone from an Oath made to him but this interpretation is inconsistent with many other texts that categorically condemn the forsaking of a vow (eg. Num 30:1). They would say, "Well, she didn't have to fulfil her vow now did she." My response would be, "But you are presuming that God forgave her for the sin of violating her vow. How do you know that is true since the Bible does not name the sin, God forgave?" Such a presumption introduces an inconsistency since Numbers 30:1 says that "we must do exactly as he has promised". It would be more consistent to reason that God forgave the daughter for "rashly making promises"(Ecc 5:1) or falsely making vows (Lev 19:12) or testing God. If this presumption is made, no contradictions are introduced.



III
Don't Use GOD's NAME to Swear Falsely

It cannot be concluded from Numbers chapter 30 that God forgives those who decide they do not want to fulfil the vows they make to Him. Ecclesiastes 5:7 states that God becomes "very angry" over someone trying to justify their not fulfilling their vows made to Him. This example in Numbers 30 does not teach that vows made to God can be annulled but confirms that an oath, even made by those of little understanding (eg. minors), is still a sin (Num 30:7 "her vow shall stand"). It is because God is a God of mercy that He forgives subsequent to (and as a consequence of) the parent's refusal to allow it.

There is a golden thread of truth that exists throughout all the Bible on the topic of 'vows' - and that truth is; that 'it is a sin not to fulfil vows made to God'. The Bible is consistent on this point.

God does not love sin. He hates sin. Since God hates divorce (Mal 2:16); divorce is a Sin. The second text (Isaiah 65:12) also gives evidence that sin is things that God "despises".

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CHAPTER 3: DIVORCE

Thesis II: The Bible teaches that Divorce is a Sin.

"Why has God abondoned us?" you cry. I'll tell you why; it is because the Lord has seen your treachery in divorcing your wives who have been faithful to you through the years, the companions you promised to care for and keep. You were united to your wife by the Lord. In God's wise plan, when you married, the two of you became one person in his sight. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. Therefore guard your passions? Keep faith with the wife of your youth. For the Lord, the God of Israel, says **he hates divorce** and cruel men. Therefore control your passions - let there be no divorcing of your wives." Malachi 2:14 - 16

"Moses did that (allowed Divorce) in recognition of your hard and evil heart..." Matt 19:8

"You deliberately sinned before my very eyes, choosing to do what you know I despise." Isaiah 65:12

"Marriage is to be honoured by all, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other." Hebrews 13:4

"...when a woman married, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, she is not longer bound to him; the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. Then she can marry someone else if she wants to. That would be wrong while he was alive, but it is perfectly all right after he dies. " Rom 7:2,3

'The Lord commands, Let not the wife depart from her husband but, if she departs, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." I Cor 7:10

"The wife is part of her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, then she may marry again..." I Cor 7:39

"For from the very first he made man and woman to be joined together permantly in marriage... and no man may separate what God has joined together" Mark 10:7 - 9

"Honour your marriage and its vows..." Heb 13:4

"...they are likely to disregard their vow to Christ and marry again. And so they will stand condemned because they broke their first promise." I Tim 5:12

"And no man may divorce what God has joined together." Matt 19:6

It is presumed that Moses gave permission for people to divorce. Matthew 19:8 quoted Jesus saying, "Moses did that [*in answer to the question as to why Moses gave permission to divorce*] in recognition of your hard and evil hearts,...". My question is, "Did Moses grant 'divorce' as we know it today with its implication of permanent separation and release from the Holy Wedding Vows?" I do not believe so because that would be inconsistent with other teachings of Moses - and Moses, being a prophet, must not contradict his own teachings and the teachings of other prophets.

How could Moses give release from the Holy Wedding Vow and yet teach that God requires us to perform our vows made to Him (Num 30:1, etc. see last chapter on Oaths). Such a teaching would be inconsistent with God's teaching - through Moses - that all must forgive upon repentance of the offender. Divorce, as we use the definition today, makes unforgiveness permanent for how can one be forgiven without reconciliation. It would be more consistent to presume that Moses 'granted the children of Israel a temporary indulgence for the sin of Divorce' - yet even this is not quite right since there is good evidence to suggest that the current definition of divorce is quite different than what Moses originally intended. Most contradictions would be resolved if we clarified what Moses meant by the word, 'Divorce'. Moses would have been consistent with his other teachings if, by the word 'Divorce', he meant what today we call 'Legal Separation'. I believe that Moses never intended to give release from the Holy Wedding Vows. He gave the children of Israel: a 'time-out', a period of recovery to spouses in conflict. They were to use that time to resolve their conflicts with the goal of gaining justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. There never was the intention that this condition would be permanent but the people, obviously, were not zealous in seeking justice, forgiveness or reconciliation.

Shouldn't you be at all concerned that on the judgement day, you will get the same 'Get Lost' brand of forgiveness that you give to those who wrong you?

I Corinthians 7:10 nicely summarizes what Moses would have meant by his use of the word "Divorce": "...if she departs, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband." This text gives two choices: remain unmarried, or reconcile with your spouse. There is no third option or the implication of allowing release from your Holy Wedding Vows. This text confirms the sanctity of the Holy Wedding Vow's: "...till death do us part...".

Jesus said, "Moses did that [*allowed divorce*] in recognition of your **hard and evil hearts...**". Does this statement from our Lord not indicate that divorce is a sin? It is only for those with hard (*unforgiving*) and evil hearts. It would be more consistent to say that Moses taught -in the meaning of words we use today- that 'There is granted to the Children of God a temporary indulgence for the sin of legal separation but only in the case of fornication (Matt 19:9) and only for those with hard and evil hearts.

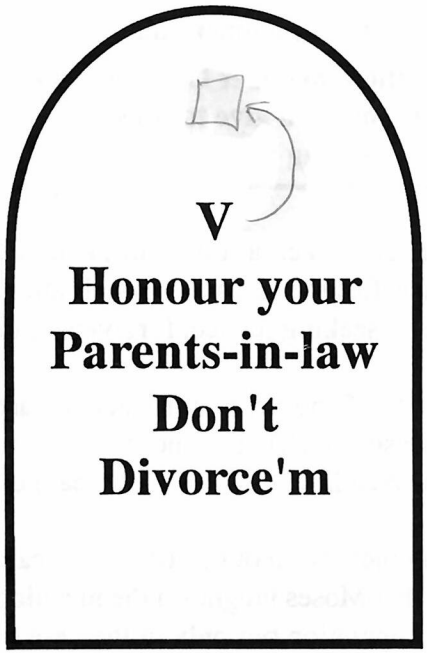
Sometimes those in relationships need time to make the necessary adjustments to make their relationships: 'right', to seek justice within their relationship, to come to forgiveness for wrongs done. There is strong evidence that this is all that Moses grants. He does not grant a release from the obligation to keep the Holy Wedding Vows you made to God because such an interpretation would be inconsistent with Moses's teachings on the sanctity of Vows made to God (ie. Num 30:1, etc.).

I Corinthians 7:15 has, historically, been used to justify Divorce: "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases:..." (I Cor 7:15 KJV). Notice that the text does not say to what they are not bound. Not bound? Not bound to what? You have to make assumptions from the context or meaning of the rest of the chapter.

The justification of divorce using this text is called "The Pollyanna Principle" and has been used by the Catholic Church for generations. It is asserted that the words: "is not bound" means that the remaining believer 'is not bound' to their Marriage or 'not bound' to their Holy Wedding Vows. Robert M. Johnston(Syllabus for Divorce and Remarriage, Ministerial Association of S.D.A., 1990 World Ministers Council, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 1-5, 1990, page 13) concurs when he states: "This means that the marriage is dissolved and the deserted believing spouse may remarry." I cannot disagree more. These conclusions do not follow from the texts. They attach this particular meaning to the words 'is not bound' but it is the result more from presumption than from evidence. They take the meaning of this text out of context. This portion of I Corinthians 7 is not talking about marriage

or the wedding vows so how could they say 'is not bound' means 'is not bound to their wedding vows'.

The seventh chapter of Corinthians is talking about the cohabitation of a believing spouse with a nonbelieving spouse (ie. spouses unequally yoked together resulting from the case where one spouse is converted to Christianity while the other is not). The train of thought begins in verse 12: "If a Christian has a wife who is not a Christian...". This passage is explaining how to handle a relationship with an unbelieving spouse. It counsels: "if he wants her to stay with him, she must not leave him."(v.13) It goes on: "But if the husband or wife who isn't a Christian is eager to leave, it is permitted." (v.15) Nowhere is there any reference to the dissolution of the marriage. It is 'presumed' that the marriage is dissolved if the spouses do not cohabitate, but is that a reasonable assumption? For example, if your spouse goes north to work on the oil rigs for at least six months, is your marriage then dissolved? If your spouse goes off to war, is your marriage then dissolved? You may not hear from them for years. Perhaps your spouse will be killed or lost in action. You may never see them again. Is your marriage then dissolved? Where do you draw the line?



It appears that 'The Pollyanna Principle' views marriage as equivalent to, and essentially made up of, the sexual act because of their insistence that marriage requires cohabitation. Is that all marriage is - reproduction? Surely marriage is much more than a biological urge. Surely love is much more than just a feeling. If cohabitation is a requirement for marriage, then the 'Pollyanna leap of presumption' is easy to understand.

There is more at stake than ones view of the meaning of marriage. This assertion that the marriage vow is annullable creates glaring inconsistencies with other Biblical texts. A little further along in the same chapter, for example, I Corinthians 7:39 states, "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will;...". This directly contradicts the idea that the marriage can be dissolved. (see also Romans 7:2,3).

The contradictions can be resolved by interpreting 'is not bound' in another way. The Living Bible has I Corinthians 7:15 saying,"In such cases the Christian husband or wife should not insist that the other stay,...". So it is interpreted to mean, 'is not bound to cohabitate', and the contradiction is further resolved by insisting that there is no requirement to cohabitate in the act of marriage. Holy Matrimony is so much more than a biological function or merely a feeling. It is a love beyond all emotion; a commitment beyond all inconveniences and trials.

The text: I Corinthians 7:15, then, does not indicate that a marriage can be dissolved because if it did, there would be glaring contradictions with I Corinthians 7:39 and Romans 7:2,3. Marriage is "till death do us part", just as we swear in our Holy Wedding Vow.

If Divorce is permanent dissolution of the wedding vow, what happens to your parents-in-law? If my wife is no longer my wife, is my mother-in-law no longer my mother? It is wrong to disavow any relationship to your mother. It is wrong to tell your mother that she is no longer your mother, yet that is what you do when you divorce your spouse. Your mother-in-law is just as much your mother ~~than~~ your biological mother. The Fifth Commandment applies just as much to your parents-in-law as to your biological parents. Is anyone so bold as to assume otherwise without disavowing your relationship to God? Some could say that relationships based on nothing but a Holy Vow take precedence over relationships based on nothing but shared genetic codes because God is only related to us by His Holy Vow to be our Father. We must overcome our biological prejudice. Disavowing a relationship to your parents-by-your-Holy-Wedding-Vow is a violation of the Fifth Commandment. Divorce, therefore, violates the fifth commandment; it is immoral and sinful, gushing forth from unforgiving and evil hearts (Matt 19:8). Adventist Ministers ought not to condone or promote such deeds by recognizing the annulment of Holy Wedding Vows.

God "Hates Divorce"

but Blesses

Remarriage?

CHAPTER 4: REMARRIAGE

Thesis III: The Bible teaches that remarriage, before the death of a spouse, is Adultery.

"But I say that a man who divorces his wife, except for fornication, causes her to commit adultery if she marries again. And he who marries her commits adultery." Matt 5:32

"And I tell you this, that anyone who divorces his wife, except for formication, and marries another, commits adultery." Matt 19:9

"And no man may separate what God has joined together." Mark 10:9

"He told them, "When a man divorces his wife to marry someone else, he commits adultery against her. And if a wife divorces her husband and remarries, she too, commits adultery." Mark 10:11, 12

"So anyone who divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Luke 16:18

"Let me illustrate: when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive. But if he dies, she is no longer bound to him; the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. Then she can marry someone else if she wants to. That would be wrong while he was alive, but it is perfectly all right after he dies." Romans 7:2, 3

"Now, for those who are married I have a command, not just a suggestion. And it is not a command from me, for this is what the Lord himself has said: A wife must not leave her husband. But if she is separated from him, let her remain single or else go back to him. And the husband must not divorce his wife." I Cor 7:10, 11

"The wife is part of her husband as long as he lives; if her husband dies, then she may marry again..." I Cor 7:39

"...if she...should obtain a divorce legally on the grounds that her husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses." (E.G. White, AH 344)

"According to God's design, this union (marriage) lasts until dissolved by the death of one of the partners." (SDA Church Manual, page 148)

If you look in the table on the page to the left of this one, under the fourth text listed, you will see the quote from our Lord, (Luke 16:18): "So **anyone** who divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery,...".

How can He be any more clear than that. If you divorce your spouse and marry someone else, you commit adultery. There are no 'ifs', 'ands', or 'buts' in this text. If you do add some exceptions, are you not then saying that this statement is not true under these conditions and untrue under those conditions. Are you not then denying the truth of our Saviours words? Are you not denying the existence of an unconditional, universal 'Truth'.

I assert that these words are true with no exceptions. To say otherwise is to contradict these words of 'The Christ'. I further assert that no other Bible text contradict these words of God and I will now give evidence that such is the case.

The current Adventist practice of allowing the remarriage of divorced persons is justified by reference to a few quotes from E.G.White and to a text in Matthew. Let us reason about the texts in Matthew first.

Matthew 19:9 says, "...anyone who divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery." Some presume that this text only applies to those who are divorced for an illegitimate reason (ie. for any other reason than unfaithfulness to the wedding vow, for example: fornication). It is further presumed: 'since this text applies only to those who don't have a legitimate divorce, it does not apply to those who have a rightful divorce, sanctioned by the church (ie. remarriage of those who have a legitimate divorce are not guilty of adultery)'. It is reasoned by those who support the current church position; that this text means that anyone who is divorced for any reason other than martial unfaithfulness, cannot be married to another spouse but if a person is divorced on the grounds of martial unfaithfulness, then they can be remarried. Doesn't this sound a little prejustice. How can you have two sets of rules: one for the deemed justified and one for the sinner?

Holy Vows-
Holy Ties,
Retie the knot-
Holy Lies.

This reasoning leads to the necessity of pastors inquiring into marriage disputes to determine the 'guilty' spouse and all the attendant horrors of such an inquiry. Such inquiries do not help repair the damage to a marriage relationship but only does more damage - it drives feuding spouses even further apart. Don't pastors know that in spousal feuds, there is no such thing as 'guilt' or 'innocence'? There are only degrees of guilt. Both are guilty and the one who looks innocent has the guilt in the areas of 'sins of omission' rather than the 'sins of commission' they are looking for. Such reasoning leads to permanent unforgiveness which is contrary to Biblical teaching. Remarriage does not help. The remarried spouse merely substitutes one set of problems for another in the new relationship and leaves the original problems unresolved. We ought to have the courage and resolve to face our problems and do whatever is necessary to bring about a resolution to our difficulties. Even in situations where spouses seem unsuited in personality there is no excuse. Ellen White says, "If your dispositions are not congenial, would it not be for the glory of God for you to change these dispositions?" (AH 345). The current adventist practices leading from their interpretation of Matthew 19:9 is not helpful and leads to more abuses than the remedy it seeks.

This interpretation of Matthew 19:9 introduces a contradiction with Luke 16:18 which clearly gives no exceptions. I believe the error in interpretation comes from the presumption that this text somehow sanctions remarriage after legitimate divorce because it is excepted from the charge of 'Adultery'. It cannot be said that this is a conclusion that logically follows from the facts. You cannot conclude from Matt 19:9 that legitimate divorce is not sinful. You cannot conclude that legitimate divorce is not adultery. This text is only talking about illegitimate divorce

Marrying a Divorced Person is Adultery
LUKE 16:18

(ie. divorce for any reason other than fornication). Nothing can be concluded about legitimate divorce. Further, any assumptions about a relationship between legitimate divorce and remarriage taken from Matt 19:9 is pure presumption which is not supported from this text. Perhaps legitimate divorce is another type of sin: unforgiveness, a hard and evil heart (Matt 19:8) and that is why it is (not mentioned in/excepted from) this text.

Another source of misinterpretation of Matt 19:9 can be seen from the following line of reasoning:

In the text:
"anyone who divorces his wife, except for fornication, **and** marries another, commits adultery.",

the word 'and' separates the two parts of the sentence. The logic and meaning of the word 'and' signifies two separate things or ideas that are compared. In other words, the word 'and' shows two separate and different things that are the same in some aspect. A phrase on one side of the word 'and' cannot refer to a phrase on the other side of the word 'and' according to our rules of grammar, so the phrase "except for fornication" refers only to the phrase, "anyone who divorces his wife". For example, in the sentence; 'The horse who was shiny black and the cow were in the meadow', you cannot say the phrase 'shiny black' refers to the cow because there is the word 'and' between that phrase and "the cow". In our text, according to the rules of grammar, the phrase "except for fornication" refers only to "anyone who divorces his wife". To propose that the exception applies to remarriage and thus sanctions it, is to violate the rules of grammar and the logical meaning of the word, 'and'.

Let us study and analyze this text further. This text can be first paraphrased and condensed to say,
add space → 'anyone who obtains an illegitimate divorce **and** remarries is adulterous.'

by substituting the words: 'illegitimate divorce' for "divorces his wife, except for fornication", and 'remarries' for "marries another".

1. It could be said, then, that this paraphrased text means that there are two unique and separate acts that made up adultery: 1. obtaining an illegitimate divorce, 2. remarriage.
2. It could be said, that this paraphrased text means that adultery requires obtaining an illegitimate divorce plus subsequent remarriage.

I am sure you agree that the second meaning of this paraphrased text more faithfully reproduces the meaning of the original text yet the first may not be so far from the meaning of the original text than you might first suspect. Most people assume that there is a continuation of acts in Matt 19:9, like a continuing story, but this may not be necessarily so. By substituting "and marries another" with 'remarries' we lose some of the sense of a progression of a story and start to focus on separate acts: 1. obtaining illegitimate divorce, 2. remarriage. So this text could be saying that remarriage, in itself, is adultery as well as the obtaining of an illegitimate divorce.

The second paraphrased text does not justify remarriage after a legitimate divorce. Even if we settle for the second meaning of the paraphrased text, there is no contradiction with Luke 16:18. One text is general while one is on specifics: the paraphrased text talks specifically about remarriage after an illegitimate divorce, while Luke 16:18 speaks generally, about the remarriage to a divorced person. The contradictions are only introduced when you try to conclude from Matt 19:9 that there is an implied sanction of remarriage for those who have a 'legitimate' divorce.

It would seem, then, that Matt 19:9 does not explicitly give sanction for the remarriage of 'legitimately' divorced persons. Like the 'Pollyanna Principle', Matt 19:9 is used as the basis of presumption of how some would like things to be.

The improper interpretation of Matt 19:9 also introduces contradictions with another text, namely Rom 7:3 - "That [*remarriage*] would be wrong while he was alive..." This is further evidence that Matt 19:9 does not sanction remarriage.

Matthew 5:32 says, "...a man who divorces his wife, except for fornication, causes her to commit adultery if she marries again....". It is much

the same as Matthew 19:9 but it charges the wife with adultery upon her remarriage. When it says, "a man who divorces his wife...", it sounds like it is the man who is the one who instigates the divorce but the wife is charged with adultery upon her remarriage: "causes her to commit adultery if she marries again.." This is evidence that remarriage is adultery without exceptions - even if you are deemed 'the innocent party'. Remarriage is wrong because it is unforgiveness - forever -and also it is the violation of Holy Vows made to God. Even 'innocence' in a marital dispute does not give you the right to violate your wedding vows. Even sin does not do away with the obligation to keep the vows you make to God. The obligation to forgive and be reconciled can never be dissolved. If we expect to be physically reconciled with God after He forgives us of our sins, then according to the Golden Rule, we must be physically reconciled to those who have wronged us. God expects nothing less (Matt 6:15 "...but if you refuse to forgive them, he will not forgive you.")

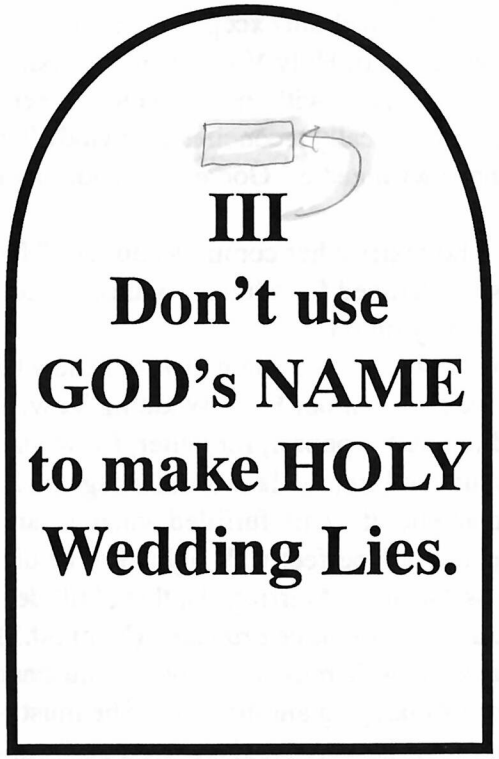
This text (Matt 5:32) goes on to say, "And he who marries her commits adultery." Notice this text does not give an exception in the case where this other man has a 'legitimate divorce'. He is condemned for adultery without exception. Even if both the man and woman had 'legitimate divorces', they are still condemned for adultery if they marry.

Romans 7:2,3 clarifies the situation even more. "...when a woman marries, the law binds her to her husband as long as he is alive." We are bound to our spouses "till death do us part...", just as we swear in our Holy Wedding Vow. We must perform this vow: under all circumstances, under all conditions, in sickness and in health, for richer and for poorer, for better, for worse, just as we swear in our Holy Wedding Vow. This text goes on to say, "But if he dies, she is no longer bound to him; the laws of marriage no longer apply to her. Then she can marry someone else if she wants to." So our Holy Wedding Vow comes to an end; they are fulfilled when we are separated by death from our spouse. The text goes on to say, "**That would be wrong while he was alive**, but it is perfectly all right after he dies." Here is further evidence that remarriage is a sin. Notice, there is no exceptions given. It is condemned as "wrong". Marriage is, then, "till death do us part", just as we swear to Our Lord and to our spouse in the Holy Wedding Vow. We must do *exactly as we have promised* (Num 30:1).

In the previous table, I Corinthians 7: 10,11 says, "A wife must not leave her husband. but if she is separated from him, let her remain single or else go back to him." There is no third choice of marrying another man. She must remain single since remarriage would be adultery.

The Bible consistently teaches that the marriage vow is sacred and we must perform our vow exactly as we have promised: "till death do us part". There is no situation that can release us from such a vow. It is true that Moses gives a temporary indulgence for the sin of 'Divorce' but only for those who cannot forgive and only in the case of unfaithfulness to the wedding vow. This indulgence by Moses is in recognition that there must be justice in marriage relationships and sometimes time apart is needed to make any adjustments necessary to build a just and honourable relationship.

The last quote in the above table is one from Ellen White, often quoted as a justification for remarriage after divorce. My question is, "Does Ellen White then contradict the Bible?". Even she says that she does not and that her writings must not be interpreted as to do so. I propose that Mrs. White writings, on the subject of divorce and remarriage, has been misinterpreted. She does not condone or promote divorce. She does not condone or promote remarriage. This last quote, which reads, "...if she..should obtain a divorce legally on the grounds that her husband was guilty of adultery, then she is free to be married to whom she chooses."(AH 344), does not say what is asserted by those who approve of remarriage. The essential word here, I believe, is the word: "legally". Mrs. White here is merely acknowledging that, according to the law of the land, she **can** be remarried, or that she is **legally able** to do so. She is not saying that it is 'morally right' to do such a thing. Even God acknowledges what people are able to do but He does not condone it. We must interpret Ellen White to mean that she acknowledges an act without recommending it, otherwise, we would be interpreting her as to contradict Biblical teaching (eg. Luke 16:18, Rom 7:3).



Ezra did not release those who married foreign wives from their vows to God not to do so. How, then could Mrs. White do the opposite of Ezra? Jesus says in Luke 16:18, "anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery."; how then could Ellen White allow it? Romans 7:3 says, "That [*remarriage*] would be wrong while [*the spouse*] was alive,...", so how could Ellen White contradict what the Bible says? The answer is: she does not contradict the Bible. She has been misinterpreted by those who hoped to justify remarriage.

Another contradiction caused by the present polices of allowing remarriage before the death of a spouse is the question of the solemnity of the wedding vows. How can anyone solemnly promise to "forsake all others" as we swear in our Wedding Vows, and later solemnly promise another person the same thing? One of these solemn promises becomes a lie. How, then can an Adventist Minister evoke the name of God to make Holy what is a lie? Isn't that a violation of the third commandment? Can God say "I hate Divorce" and then approve of remarriage which makes divorce permanent?

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY

1	Vows made to God are sacred	Jer 34:16	"...you...have defiled my name by shrugging off your oath..."
2	To break a Vow to God is a sin	Ecc 5:6	"In that case, your mouth is making you sin."
3	There is no Biblical teaching that provides for the release from a Vow made to God	Acts Ch. 5	Ananias & Sapphira killed
4	The Bible teaches that Moses gave the children of Israel a temporary indulgence for the sin of Divorce but only when the spouses refuse to fogive	Matt 19:8	"Moses did that (allowed divorce) in recognition of your hard and evil hearts..."
5	To maintain consistence with his former teachings (e.g. Num 30:1), Moses's use of the word 'Divorce' must have been equivalent to the present meaning of the words 'Legal Separation'.	Num 30:1	"Now Moses summoned the leaders of the tribes and told them, "The Lord has commanded...that vow must not be broken..."
6	Divorce is a sin	Malachi 2:16	"For the Lord, the God of Israel, says He hates divorce."
7	Divorce does not release a person from the obligation to keep their Holy Wedding Vows.	I Cor 7:10	"...let her remanin single or else go back to him."
		I Cor 7:39	"The wife is part of her husband as long as he lives..."
		Mark 10:9	"And no man may separate what God has joined together."
8	Without exceptions, Remarriage, before the death of a spouse, is adultery	Rom 7:3	"That (remarriage) would be wrong while he (her husband) was alive..."

Our policies are showing God - not only our doctrines - to be contradictory and full of falsehood. The policies ought to be changed to better reflect the true nature of God and also to eliminate the contradictions in the present system.

The texts traditionally used to justify divorce and remarriage: I Cor 7:15 (The Pollyanna Principle) and Matt 19:9 both involve reference to implied meanings which are not justified since these references create contradictions with other Bible texts.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Seventh-day Adventist Church amend/rescind/create policies that reflect the Biblical truths as revealed in this paper. This will, undoubtedly create some discomfort as there are some in the Church that are divorced and remarried. As the Church changes to conform to Biblical teachings, it would be unwise to persecute those who are found in sin due to the past teaching of the Church. Perhaps the following analogy would be of help:

> If I have stolen a car and have after repented, I would try to return the car to its rightful owner. If that owner was so angry that he refused to see me or reclaim the car, would I then abandon the car, exposing it to destruction from neglect? No. I ought to take it home and care for it for rightful owner; being ever ready and willing to return the car to its rightful owner whenever he asks for it.

So it should be with those who are in the church and are remarried while their rightful spouse yet lives. They ought to be allowed the freedom to decide what course they will follow. In the final analysis, if they choose to continue together, they must live as one in possession of stolen property; making it clear to their rightful spouses that they are ever willing and ready to reconcile upon their request. I am sure such a tenuous and temporary relationship will be most unsatisfying to many couples but this is the price of sin.

If the Church were to expel all sin within the Church, there would be no-one left. It is enough to acknowledge and speak the truth about sin. The Church is not called to persecute sin but to witness against it. This is a subtle yet important distinction. Witnessing does not involve the use of force. To acknowledge and teach the truth is enough. If anyone loves the sin of adultery, how will they be happy residing in a group who condemn the act with their tongues. They will leave the church of their own accord. It is not the function of the Church to persecute anyone. Let the sword of the truth cut away the evil in the church. To many times, in an attempt to deal with evil, the contest gets personal and the church ends up trying to expel the person instead of just the evil deed. There seems to be too much emphasis upon punishment and not enough on reconciliation.

I recommend that the Church Policy be that there be no persecution or punishment for the sin of Divorce - illegitimate or otherwise. Divorced persons need the 'freedom of conscience' to decide how best to deal with their marital dispute. It is enough that the Church recognize that they are bound to their rightful spouse 'till death do them part'. Perhaps their disputes are of such a nature that separation for a period is required to better obtain a just and honourable settlement of their dispute. The spouses must have the freedom to decide. Only they can know what is best for them. No-one else has the right or wisdom to interfere.

I recommend that the Church Policy be that 'no Adventist Minister may officiate at the remarriage of divorced persons before the death of their rightful spouse'. This is essentially the same as the current policy of no allowing Adventist Ministers officiate at a marriage between an Adventist and a nonbeliever. Why shouldn't it also apply to divorced persons?

"And no [*Adventist Minister*] may divorce what God has joined together." (Matt 19:6 LB)

I recommend that the Church Policy be that disciplinary action only be considered with respect to remarried persons, upon refusal of a remarried person to separate from the replacement-spouse when asked to do so by the rightful spouse. The rightful spouse does not have the 'right' to force reconciliation (ie. cohabitation) but according to I Cor 7:11, the spouse must "remain single or go back..." In my opinion, it would be best if those persons remarried before the death of their spouse, leave their 'wrong' relationships to demonstrate their intentions of reconciling with their rightful spouse but I don't think it is wise to try to enforce such a situation. Let God take care of these situations. If the Church acknowledges Biblical truth, the people will choose the path to conformity in a manner that is best suited for them.

CHAPTER 7: IN CASE YOU WERE WONDERING

I have a vested interest in the outcome of this proposal. I am an Adventist. My Adventist Minister married my wife to my friend and fellow church member. Not only has my beloved Adventist Minister neglected to make right what he has done wrong, he has refused to acknowledge any wrongdoing. He merely acknowledges that he was deceived. I want the return of: my wife, my family and my home which was so wrongly taken from me. In my experience and in our dispute, my wife tends to sacrifice her will to that of someone else. She once nearly threw me out because she thought our marriage was not legal since one of our witnesses was a legal minor. Who is to say that my wife does not continue to live in adultery because she feels obligated to the vows she took with my replacement seeing that my Adventist Minister has refused to rescind his telling her that "their marriage is a legitimate and bona fide marriage". I seek justice.

Remarriage is Banishment from my Home - Forever

Forgiveness without reconciliation is Dead

Writing this paper has been one of the most painful and heartbreaking experiences. Confronting the ones you love with their evildoing is worse than death in a hail of bullets. So I sign this paper with my tears and blood.

For those who read this and are remarried before the death of your rightful spouse; I hope you will not choose bad feelings over this paper. It is an important topic which must be resolved. If you happen to believe that this paper is wrong; please write. I am most interested in being shown any errors in logic or theology I might have made.

Robert Norvin Crawford
Calgary Central SDA Church

CHAPTER 8: YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

I wrote a letter to The Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of SDA. Here is an excerpt:

> "Actually, if a person feels that he has significant new light, something he would like to lay before the church as a whole, the procedure is this. He presents his material to his local congregation. If merit is found in it, then it is reviewed by the local conference. If merit continues to be found in the larger circle, then it may be reviewed by the local union conference or referred by the union to us for a further examination."

I hereby submit this paper to you for your consideration. I am laying this material before you - the local congregation. Please don't say it is not your responsibility to judge such an issue and throw it into the laps of your employees at the Conference office. I am asking you - my fellow Adventist Church Members to judge this issue and make your recommendations to our Church Elders and Conference Church Officers. In giving this paper to the Church Elders, I expect the issue to be brought before the membership for discussion and judgement based on Biblical evidence.

Blank pages at the back of this booklet are for your comments. Please feel free to write directly on those pages, sign your name, and pass along the booklet to your elder. You may want to write a letter to the Conference President, presenting your convictions as to the truth or error of the message in this booklet. Please do so. Below is the address for your convenience. Please share your unique insight on this important topic so we all may learn God's Holy Truth.

Sincerely yours,
R.C.

Robert Crawford

Alberta Conference President:

Elder Don Corkum
Alberta Conference of Seventh-Day Adventist Church
Box 5007
Red Deer, Alberta
Canada T4N 6A1

[2026 Note, the above address is long out of date.]

~~For Your Comments and Convictions:~~ move to top of last page (24)

For Your Comments and Convictions:

For Your Comments and Convictions:

THE END